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# The Autobiography of A. Kilo Watt

By William B. Ross

**T**O MOST people I would be the most peculiar thing imaginable. I am not young, neither am I old. I can truthfully say that I never had a mother or a father, for I was never born. Rather, let me say I am new, for I have just been created.

The first thing I can remember is a peculiar, penetrating hum. It didn't seem so much like a noise as it did like a vibration, combined with this was a queer revolving motion. Then suddenly, a gathering or centralization took place and there I was, a unit of electricity commonly called a kilowatt.

I was in a big box-like affair and I was just a tiny particle, the pressure in the box was exceedingly great and seemed to be increasing, but I floated around. Suddenly I came in contact with a wire which seemed to lead from this box. I started along this wire and found that the pressure then stopped increasing.

I was oblong shaped, about the same in proportion as a quinine capsule, only infinitesimally smaller. Immediately preceding and following me were others who were shaped as I was, but altogether different in character. I was white, optimistic and happy while these others were dark, pessimistic and surly.

About this time I noticed a strange bond between myself and the unit which followed me. We seemed to have a queer magnetic attraction for each other that was lacking between myself and the unit which preceded me.

I spoke to the wire about this whole procedure and was told that it was not a new thing, that of all the units who traveled this wire, there was always a bond between a white and a black unit and that the regularity never changed. First came a white unit, then a black one. The wire also told me that I wasn't a complete unit in myself, two of us, a black one and a white one, just made one unit and we were called a cycle. The white particles were called positive and the black ones were negative charges of electricity.

We were all squeezed and confined; nevertheless we were making progress. Soon we came to several large bumps in the wire. At every bump there seemed to be an attraction or force pulling in another direction than that in which we were going. I soon learned that these bumps were switches and that many of my comrades couldn't resist the force here and consequently were shunted off on

minor routes. However, as I learned later, these routes all lead to the same final end, that of obliteration for all who traveled them.

The units ahead of me were bending this way and that under the influence of the different forces at different switches. Suddenly they shot off to the left on an extra large wire, and in a short time I was pulled off on the same wire. I had no thought of where I was going. I just followed the course of least resistance.

I found myself on a cable, racing along trying to keep up to the ones ahead of me. We were under the ground and a buzzing and general excitement seemed to be coming nearer and nearer. Suddenly I was catapulted out into a dark brown, shiny liquid that smelled terrible, like old rags burning. It was while I was in this transformer oil I noticed a queer squeezing process; it seemed as though I was being all rolled up, although my size stayed the same, my shape was changing from an oval into a sphere. Here everyone was bumping into each other and always moving around. Everyone was shouting and behaving in an agitated manner and into the midst of all this confusion a queer hum mixed itself. Later I found out that the hum was caused by all our moving around and that we had been moving in a step-up transformer.

Finally after quite a bit of roving around I came upon a small wire. This wire had an irresistible appeal for me. I immediately started along it and the first thing I knew I was out in the daylight. Soon I came to a large box-like contraption which was sitting on a platform. I went into this and found that the wire went straight through. Near the center of this affair was a bright shiny ball which extended an appeal to me. The appeal, however, wasn't quite great enough for me to leave the wire on which I was traveling, and soon I had rushed past this temptation.

I asked the wire and found that had I answered this appeal I would have immediately ceased to exist; the purpose for which I had been created would have been cheated. This contraption was a lightning arrester and led right to the ground (which is destruction for all such as me).

The wire that I now skipped merrily along over the tops of poles which were higher than any of the trees or houses. On every pole the wire was tied to a brown shiny porcelain insulator. Some of these were cracked

and, at times as I passed these, I caught glimpses of one of my companions just disappearing into a crack. I was told that this was the end of them and right there I vowed never to deviate from the straight and narrow. I later found out though, that one might just as well be a fatalist, for if I happened to be unlucky, or a bit careless, a similar fate would be mine.

The wire now left the city limits and I could see a great distance in every direction. As I looked ahead I could see no end of poles and wire, so I gave no thought to my final destination. I hummed a merry tune as I skipped along as did the others. In fact we caused quite a hum.

It wasn't long though until suddenly we started going faster; soon we were traveling at break-neck speed; I could feel the wire getting hotter and hotter, due to our acceleration. Then without a bit of warning we were stopped dead still. Everyone was jammed into each other and confusion reigned for the moment. An explanation was soon apparent. The wire had broken under the strain. A lineman had been working on it and in a careless moment had rubbed a ground wire into contact with our wire, thus creating a short cut to destruction for many of my companions. The wire had become so hot that it had finally broken and stopped us, thus putting a stop to our journey.

The pressure behind us became noticeable now; when we had been moving I hadn't noticed it but now it became quite uncomfortable, it was so strong.

I suppose we were at a standstill for nearly an hour when just as suddenly as we stopped we started ahead again. We didn't travel at the high speed we had previously assumed and the wire was noticeably cooler. Soon I came to where the break had been. The lineman was soldering the joint he had just finished making. He held a large pot of molten solder under the wire and by using a ladle poured some of the solder over the wire and caught the surplus in the pot held under the wire.

While we had been waiting for him to mend the wire we had all been talking and some one had wondered where we were going. Now this was the paramount conjecture. The wire didn't know because it only went as far as a transformer bank.

It was rather late in the day when I reached this transformer bank. I knew what was ahead of me because I had been forewarned, so I wasn't surprised when I was shot into the transformer oil. I wasn't prepared, however, for the change in my physical appearance. I was stretched out in an oblong shape oval again. Then I went out on a wire and found that each one of my fellow travelers had had his shape transformed too. We again were all similar.

Now we traveled more slowly. The pressure on us wasn't so great. In the distance a whistle shrieked and immediately we were slowed down so that we hardly moved at all. We barely made any more headway until it was nearly dusk; then we went a little faster, but the increase in the rate of speed was scarcely perceptible.

After the night was half gone we stopped altogether; it wasn't unpleasant though now for the pressure wasn't too great and we had lots of company to talk to.

In the morning the whistle blew again and immediately we were under way. As we looked ahead we could discern another town. We entered this city and proceeded directly through it to a large building. There was quite a rumbling and growling which came along the wire from this building. We knew this was our destination because during the night the wire had told us that we were going to a saw mill.

Though we knew that our end was near no one seemed to be troubled. In fact every one was quite happy as we all pushed and crowded to get into this mill.

Just before entering the building we were put through another transformer. Here our physical appearance was altered again. We were stretched and stretched to a great length; so much so that when the process was completed we were so thin and elongated that we closely resembled a hair. Finally we got out of the transformer and started through the shop. I wandered around on different wires, watching my comrades disappear into certain black contrivances and feeling quite excited myself. Finally I felt an urge come over me to go into one certain wire which led to a great box-like affair. I immediately yielded to this impulse and felt myself racing to meet it. A happy, joyous feeling came over me and although I knew it was the end, I plunged forward, headlong. Immediately I was conscious of the peculiar penetrating hum which was my first sensation. Then the revolving vibration began to affect me, everything grew dim, I grew weaker and weaker, but I was happy. I knew the end was at hand but I had lived a useful life, so what more could I want?

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